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ABSTRACT

A proposal for a continuing education center for Alaska points out that there is a need for expanded adult educational opportunities on several levels. A more extensive program of adult basic education is necessary particularly to help prepare the native segment of the population for employment. The expected growth of the petroleum industry will bring a need for training in new skills. The growing population will have expanded educational needs. Interest in the state and its development, and in Arctic research, indicates that it would be most useful to have a site which could be used as a residential continuing education and conference center. It is suggested that such a center be established, to be affiliated with the University of Alaska. (MF)

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A Center for Continuing Education in Alaska

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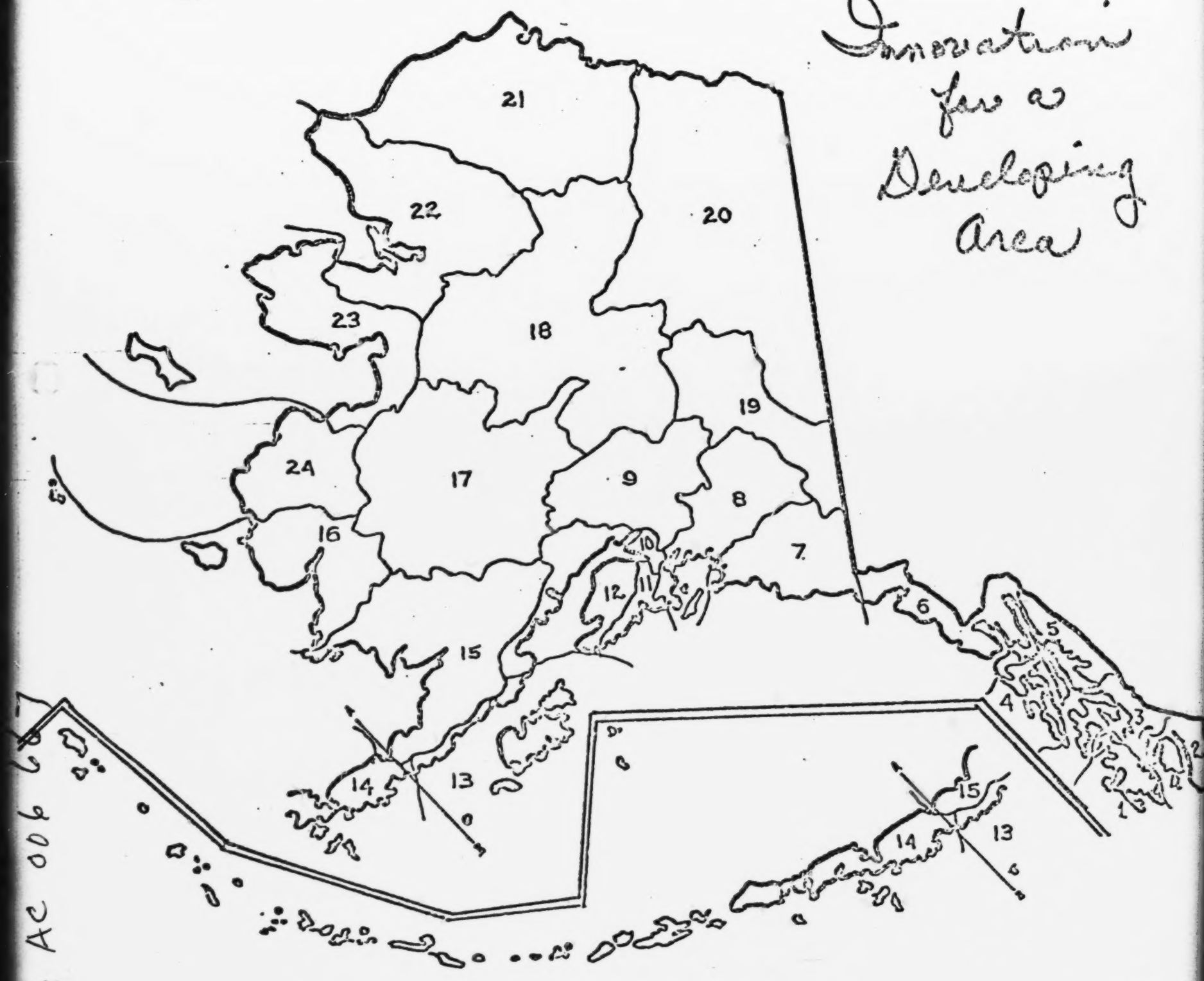
Innovation for a Developing Area



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A PROPOSED CENTER FOR CONTINUING EDUCATION IN ALASKA: INNOVATION FOR A DEVELOPING AREA

by

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The Adult Basic Education Needs Assessment for Alaska, completed under the auspices of the University of Alaska in 1969, together with its supporting research, provides considerable information pertinent to adult education planning in Alaska. Largely concentrated in the Native segment, a number of population characteristics are isolated and reduced to numbers and locations that provide a base for planning and program development. Such research dealing with adult education in Alaska is not meant to slight the non-Native population, but transient and migratory aspects of population other than Native alters continually the population numbers and factors related to over-all local academic achievement levels.

Recommendations for educational planning based upon the relatively stable Native needs in basic, vocational, and occupational education can be generalized proportionately to the entire population when definitions of categories within adult education are being described. The planning and implementation of specific adult education programs must be accomplished in a reasonable fashion. Adult basic education integrated with occupational education and basic living skills should be concentrated in the rural areas and the full range of adult education offered in the urban areas. It should be anticipated that expansion of adult basic and occupational education in the non-urban areas would expand to include practical opportunities for rural people

to participate in comprehensive adult education as the climate and need arise.

Adult education has four principal functions: remedial; vocational and economic; liberal and humane; and cicizenship and political. Adult education in Alaska is conducted and financed under three main kinds of organizations: educational institutions which are not primarily responsible for the education of adults; organizations and corporations which are not educational but have a direct or vested interest in the education of adults; and special organizations or agencies whose special purpose is the education of adults. It is mandatory in a dynamic socio-economic environment like Alaska's, that adequate steps be taken to insure that adult education in the state be comprehensive in its scope, of meaningful content, and of worthwhile quality in keeping with the needs of the state and the unlimited potential of its population. Overemphasis upon one aspect of adult education will ultimately result in serious gaps in other areas, and will most certainly lead to public dissatisfaction and costly remedial adjustments to the system at a later date.

Urban surveys can provide the statistical base for assessing continuing and higher education needs for the state. Department of Labor and Department of Health and Welfare surveys, drawing upon affiliated resources, can provide the statistics for assessing specialized adult educational needs under Vocational Rehabilitation and Mental Health. For purposes of long range planning, some means must be built into assessment procedures that will permit the state to anticipate the needs of children and adults who will accompany oil-related construction and its supporting services and industries. Many of these people will arrive with educational deficiencies and by their inclusion in the state's population, will greatly add to the demands

for various kinds of adult education. The public school system through enrollment records, can provide considerable specific data regarding on-going immigration.

Presently 92 per cent of the adult Native population (an estimated 25,201 persons) are eligible for adult basic education according to state policy. Of these, 13,739 individuals have completed less then 6 years of schooling, and the majority are under age 45. The dropout rate for Native children remains very high, so the need for extensive remedial adult basic education will not diminish appreciably in the near future.

The Native population holds approximately 11,415 able-bodied adults in 1969 who are categorically jobless. The male-female ratio in this group appears about equal, and reports indicate that the women are as desirous of obtaining jobs and vocational or occupational training as the men. Approximately 21,000 Native youngsters will enter the wage earning ages between 1967 and 1981, and most of these youth will be ill-equipped to enter the job market.

Little data is available regarding the number of people approaching retirement age--either age 45 for the military or the 60's for other occupations. It is, however, generally believed that the older segment of the population is expanding as the cost of living in the state becomes less burdensome and people can afford to retire in Alaska. The life expectancy of the resident Native population is longer, as well, and as time goes by the age ratios of the state may more closely resemble the U.S. average. This will require planning for the educational needs preparatory to second careers, reduced physical abilities, and enrichment for living out the older years.

Little question remains that the petroleum industry will supply a stable

and wealthy foundation for the state's economy. The implications for adult education planning are many. The principal needs will be to provide for adult basic, continuing, and higher education of many kinds to meet a wide spectrum of needs. These can range from short-term intensive training in new techniques for occupational skills, education in manpower management and the physical sciences, and instruction for enrichment in living. It will necessarily include learning transmitted in situations ranging from the formal classroom and laboratory, to national and international symposiums to exchange information and ideas at the highest echelons of business, government, and industry.

It is recommended that the following actions be incorporated in comprehensive planning for education in Alaska:

1. that the state encourage urban areas to assess local needs for adult education and that the state extend all possible support to the establishment of programs which will satisfy those needs.
2. that the state extend all possible support to an appropriate agency or institution which, by mutual agreement, shall undertake to develop a central repository for research and other pertinent materials required for resources in educational planning for adults.
3. that particular attention be directed to the development of innovative programs in higher education which develop professional leadership in adult education and incorporate village-level Native Alaskan participation in planning and implementation of adult education for the rural areas.
4. that effort should be directed toward coordination and increased

multi-directional communication among individuals and agencies concerned with or engaged in adult education in Alaska.

5. that competent <u>action</u> research in adult education in Alaska, with a centralized administration be instituted and maintained.

6. that adult education planning in Alaska accept the dicotomy imposed by reality and proceed for that base. Educational planning for the one-fifth of the population classed as rural, which is largely economically and socially disadvantaged, must be programmed and executed differently than that offered to the urban population. Differences in urban population life-styles require specialized planning as well, but with a different relationship to time and facility. Urban adult education forecasts must provide the means to meet the needs of disadvantaged minorities who will follow increased employment opportunities in Alaska, and thus increase the demand for adult basic and occupational education.

7. that motivation and support for comprehensive adult education in Alaska be generated cooperatively by the state, business, and professional organizations through a massive statewide program to develop generalized awareness of occupational and educational choices and opportunities for all citizens of the state.

8. that the divisions of specialization within the field of adult education be clearly defined and interpreted as they are related to Alaska's present and anticipated needs and that these categories subsequently be integrated into the comprehensive goals

and objectives of education in Alaska.

The investigation preliminary to this report drew extensively upon a special report to the University Board of Regents, Continuing Education in Alaska, prepared in 1962, and the documented experience of the Kellogg Foundation obtained during a series of projects over the past fifteen years which resulted in the establishment of twenty university affiliated regional residential continuing education centers. Leading educators throughout the world have stated that such residential centers designed to communicate, exchange, and disseminate knowledge and ideas through university-level guidance is economically feasible and of inestimatable value to the citizenry.

Alaska's potential as a major oil producing state and a prime factor in development of the North American region make it a focus for international attention. The coming years in Alaska will require that attention be concentrated upon promoting expanded and improved social and educational practices, energy producing complexes, flood control projects, forest wildlife and recreational programs, and a balanced industrial development. An ever increasing number of people migrating to Alaska, as well as those already residing in the state have begun a restless surge to new localized environments for which they are not prepared socially, economically, or educationally. The development of needed manpower to form a strong social intrastructure to withstand the internal changes while accomodating the continual progressive changes in technology is the challenge facing Alaskan educators. Effective communication of knowledge and ideas between specialists, leaders, and adult learners through effective dialogue takes place efficiently in personal encounters within the objective atmosphere of a university setting. It is proper for the University of Alaska, as part of its recognized responsibilities

to provide the physical and technological structure to support adult educational encounters in public interest.

The University of Alaska, through its fivefold function, and within the limitations of its resources, serves all of the public education needs beyond high school for a sub-continent--the State of Alaska. Within the purview of the enabling legislation which established the university, both authority and intent direct the university to engage in continuing education as well as higher education. Until the present time, limited resources have severely curtailed the university's abilities to meet the needs for continuing education in the state. The sharply increased need for quality education for adults beyond high school is brought about by the economic development within the state that can provide the resources to meet the need.

Investigation into various procedures to facilitate continuing education in Alaska indicates an essential immediate step is to provide a focus for continuing education within the university. This focus may properly be a campus residential coordinated action to meet adult education needs in an adult manner.

Continuing education, as used herein, extends to all forms of learning for adults and includes the educational needs of men and women who hold university degrees as well as those who have received little formal schooling. It is stated in Continuing Education in Alaska: (p.49)

> We believe that any state university (and specifically the University of Alaska) is required: first, to extend the facilities and services including research of the campus, to all parts of the state, not only for the individual benefit of the citizen, but also for the well being of the community and the state; second, to establish and maintain such all-state services as will promote equality of educational opportunity and the public good; and finally, to essay the role of guide and counselor in connection with formation of citizen judgement upon cultural, philosophical, and political questions of public concern.

Alaska is presently entering a new era of reduced geographic isolation and one which requires a growing integration with national and international points of view. What is being proposed herein will provide a learning center for adults at all levels who are involved in learning about:

1. the anticipated development of a petroleum-related industrial base which normally generates secondary manufacturing and service industry, economic development and, thereby expands the demand for social, educational, and technological skills at all occupational levels;
2. original and applied research for problem solving purposes related to expected demographic changes within the present population, the increased in-migration, and the overall change in seasonal manpower demands and utilization of the existing workforce;
3. assessing and meeting the needs related to population changes, academic achievement, vocational education, and intellectual interest which accompany a changed economy;
4. assisting and enabling the university and the state to serve the educational needs of the population;
5. scientific investigation of the Arctic Ecumien (Arctic phenomenon, natural resources, human environment, political implications of development);
6. assisting the university to support and safeguard the accumulation of new and existing knowledge about the region;
7. ways and means to achieve an active exchange of knowledge and extension of learning related to the following:
   a) transportation in the North--air, sea and land;
   b) business and industrial growth and development relationships;

c) international banking and finance as related to Alaska;

d) intelligent and planned extraction and use of natural resources;

e) natural phenomenon of the Arctic;

f) human growth and development in the North--the resource and potential;

g) preservation of the Alaskan cultural heritage;

h) cross-cultural education and occupational training.

At the present time the university is greatly curtailed by insufficient space and inadequate facilities to meet continuing education requirements beyond limited course work, directed study, and informational services. In the face of such inadaquacies, increased demand for dialogue concerning the socio-economic affairs of the state and northern region may, in time, limit both the effectiveness and the stature of the university.

A continuing education center located on campus could be used for the education and instruction of business, professional, government, labor, agricultural, and church leaders. An operation based upon regional rather than a statewide or highly localized basis may best serve Alaskan interests in all aspects of life in the North.

Continuing Education in Alaska was compiled in 1962. The reporting committee, in attempting to provide guidance for an expanded university service, was limited by the then present reality of an impoverished state treasury. The recommendations dealing with continuing education at that time accepted the situational necessity to limit most residential continuing education to existing public accommodations in various communities. The newly acquired economic and political status of the state permits the recommendations of the committee to be interpreted in accordance with an ideal--a

full service residential continuing education center of the North. The following statement of the committee regarding continuing education may now be adjusted to relate to the greatly improved economic status of the state treasury: (p.115)

> We would urge that in the plans for residence at the University itself, provision be made for such a residential center. Such a center might be associated with the offices, library, and other resources of the Office of Statewide Services which we have earlier recommended. We are convinced that . . . would soon be used many or most weeks of the year for a great many educational activities of the highest value to the individuals concerned, as well as to the State, and that such activities will help develop a strong bond of support for the University on the part of most of the leaders of the State.

The planning and financing of a center must be derived through articulated development to enable it to serve the state through a central administration and a residential facility on the university campus. Regional and local leadership and faculty contribution can be incorporated through the regional centers of the university. This can extend the services of the center throughout the Alaskan education system through a "satellite" method of operation.

During recent years, conferences of both international and national significance convened at the university have made invaluable contributions to Alaska. There may presently be a danger that forthcoming conferences will necessarily be reduced in size or convened outside of the state only for reasons related to physical accommodation. Increase in local populations, university enrollment, and the general demand upon existing public meeting facilities in the state appear to have converged at a saturation point. Present indications are that population growth accompanied by a rising demand for a continuing education and professional group dialogue will continue indefinately. It would thus appear that at the time when adult education needs

are being made manifest the lack of suitable places in which to conduct such education also becomes clearly obvious. The guidelines for establishing quality offerings in adult education so clearly described in Continuing Education in Alaska appear to have gained added urgency since 1962 when the publication first appeared.

> In summary, we believe that the University can and should set an example respecting the allocation of funds for the education of adults. Leadership must first come from the University and the Department of Education with responsibility to be assumed locally as quickly as is possible. The University should adopt the principle of employing some venture capital in adult education.... (p.124).

Recent international University of Alaska conferences have involved many sponsors including the State of Alaska, Arctic Research Laboratories, Geophysical Institute, Institute of Social, Economic, and Government Research, and other departments of the university. The Twentieth Alaska Science Conference, in 1969, brought nearly one thousand people to the campus. This many additional people converging upon an institution already operating at physical capacity may cast an underserved shadow on the community and the organization. Insufficient personal accommodations, inadequate space for general and special meetings, and inconvenineces sustained by participants, guests, and staff can create the atmosphere for negative feelings unjustly transferred to the conference itself. Complications resulting from limited facilities may dampen enthusiasm for future conference development and diminish wholehearted support for such major endeavors on the part of those responsible for project planning and execution. Additionally, the principal figures around whom such events evolve may hesitate to accept on invitation where personal inconvenience is a deciding factor.

Since statehood, the demand for a full-service residential international conference center in Alaska has steadily increased until it is now a manifest

need. The institution might correctly be termed an "International Conference Center for Continuing Education in the North." Important symposiums, conferences, workshops and seminars concerned with the North have increased in members and significance over the past five years. Some major meetings presently are not scheduled for Alaska largely because there is no adequate facility to contain them (e.g. "International Conference on Cross-Cultural Education in the North" sponsored in part by the University of Alaska held in 1969 in Montreal, Canada). Another sustained dialogue of vital importance which could properly be conducted at a continuing education center revolves around the kind of educational work performed at the direction of the Alaska legislature by organizations like the Brookings Institute and the Stanford University Research Institute. Private industry is also actively engaged in international and national dialogue centering upon the natural and human resources of Alaska relative to transportation, communication, economic development and the formation of political policies that may affect the affairs of other states or nations. Some educational conferences centered on Alaska now take place at far away places and problems of distance and communication work to the disadvantage of all concerned (e.g. Japan, San Francisco, or Houston).

A continuing education center at the university may automatically avoid some misunderstandings about the geographic, sociologic, and technologic environment of Alaska. Due to its university affiliation, the center may greatly enhance the rapid development of dynamic dialogue affecting the North and lend stature to the work of those associated with center offerings.

Several conditions provide unique qualifications to make the University of Alaska campus location for a continuing education center both convenient and desirable--some established and others in the planning stage:

1. resources to extend courtesies and honors as appropriate to national and international leaders, officials, and authorities who meet to confer on matters of mutual concern;
2. immediate access to the intellectual and educational leadership resources of Alaska's leading university;
3. an atmosphere condusive to serious undertakings free from distractions of congestion and commercialism;
4. resources and facilities which will accommodate Western and non-Western sensibilities and backgrounds, as well as those of sophisticated and unsophisticated persons;
5. comprehensive personal services including comfortable accommodations, convenient international and intra-Alaska transportation, library and resource materials collections, and the social and recreational facilities of the adjacent communities.

World-wide reports regarding education for adults provides evidence that university based residential conference centers for continuing education now in use appear effective and successful at all levels of learning. There seems to be little question that Alaska has needed a residential adult learning center for many years. The changing socio-economic conditions appear to have intensified the need and emphasized the immediacy of demand. Establishment of a residential center for continuing education in Alaska at the University of Alaska at this time may be justified by present as well as predicted needs. It appears that the state's economy is sufficient to provide the foundation. The establishment of a control education center is implicitly authorized and directed by the purpose and intent of the university's founding legislation. Insufficient foresight and investment in providing continuing

education for Alaska may ultimately result in serious gaps in the overall educational attainment of resident citizens, level of the resident population, limitation in the development of the state's human resource potential, and place a ceiling on individual occupational or professional advancement. Failure to provide adequate quality continuing education may lead to public dissatisfaction and costly subsequent remedial adjustment to the Alaskan education system. Early establishment of sound adult education will avoid a common risk that can arise. Remedial action tends to be reactive to immediate pressing economic problems rather than prevention or elimination of basic educational deficiencies.

State plan for education which directs a future oriented comprehensive emphasis appropriate to the technical and professional growth and intellectual enrichment of its adult population is a social and an economic obligation of a progressive society.

The State of Alaska, by virtue of the legislative direction establishing the University of Alaska, has obligated itself to serve the "beyond high school" educational needs of the state. Alaska's economic resources may now permit the university to expand its educational services in keeping with its stated objectives as they appear in the opening statement of the University of Alaska Catalogue: "...to instruct adults, increase knowledge of value to mankind, to provide and develop competent leadership in the continued improvement of the state as a good region in which to live, and to enhance a sense of individual worth in a democratic society." (p.7).

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